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Special Committee on the Situation with regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples

Summary record of the 1st meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Thursday, 21 February 2013, at 10 a.m.

Temporary Chair: Mr. Ban Ki-moon ..... (Secretary-General of the United Nations)
Chair: Mr. Morejón ..... (Ecuador)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.25 a.m.

Opening of the session by the Secretary-General

1. **The Temporary Chair** said that the Third International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism was well under way. Against the backdrop of ongoing financial crises and growing budgetary pressures, the international community should focus more on achieving results. Having recently invited the General Assembly to consider reviewing mandated activities, he was also appealing to the Special Committee to review its practices in order to maximize its effectiveness.

2. The international community was more convinced than ever that colonialism had no place in the modern world. Its eradication, in keeping with the principles of the Charter of the United Nations and the relevant United Nations resolutions, was a common global endeavour that required the constructive engagement of all concerned — the Special Committee, the administering Powers and the Non-Self-Governing Territories — working on a case-by-case basis.

3. The Special Committee should be at the forefront in identifying opportunities for change and in promoting priorities in the decolonization process for the benefit of all. As the intergovernmental body exclusively devoted to decolonization, it was expected to devise fresh and creative ways of mobilizing the political will to advance its agenda. The world was going through a period of transition, with many old structures breaking down and new arrangements taking shape.

4. In the area of decolonization, 16 Non-Self-Governing Territories required the world's attention. The narrative of "decolonization deferred" was no longer tenable. The world could no longer afford the luxury of indulging in rhetoric and rituals. Concrete action and tangible results were of the essence. It was time to engage in a new, fully inclusive dialogue about decolonization. Change, while sometimes frightening, was far more preferable to the status quo.

5. The Secretariat would continue to provide assistance to help the Special Committee in implementing its programme of work. He wished the Special Committee every success in the year ahead.

Adoption of the agenda

6. *The agenda was adopted.*

Election of officers

7. *Mr. Morejón (Ecuador) was elected Chair, Mr. Reyes Rodríguez (Cuba) and Mr. Touray (Sierra Leone) were elected Vice-Chairs, and Mr. Ja'afari (Syrian Arab Republic) was elected Rapporteur, by acclamation.*

8. *Mr. Morejón (Ecuador) took the Chair.*

9. **The Chair** said that the delegations of Argentina, Costa Rica, Cyprus, Ghana, Mauritania, Namibia, South Africa, Spain, Turkey and the United Arab Emirates, as well as the observer for the Holy See had indicated their wish to participate in the opening meeting of the Special Committee as observers.

10. The slow progress made by the Special Committee in tackling the issue of decolonization called for a new momentum and revitalization of the Special Committee's role and programme of work, with the support and cooperation of the administering Powers. The list of 16 Non-Self-Governing Territories should be reviewed on a case-by-case basis to determine which Territories should remain on it and which should be removed.

11. The members of the Special Committee should also maintain direct and constructive dialogue with the administering Powers and territorial Governments, as exemplified in the case of New Caledonia. In 2014, that Territory would be entering the final phase of the Noumea Accord, which called for the holding of a referendum on self-determination between 2014 and 2018.

12. The Special Committee's regional seminars enabled participants to exchange information on the challenges facing each Territory and on the role played by the United Nations in the decolonization process. His country, Ecuador, had offered to host the 2013 regional seminar of the Special Committee.

13. If he heard no objection he would take it that the Special Committee wished to approve the proposal by Ecuador to host the 2013 regional seminar.

14. *It was so decided.*

Organization of work (A/AC.109/2013/L.1 and L.2)

15. **The Chair** drew attention to a note by the Secretary-General, contained in document A/AC.109/2013/L.1, indicating the resolutions and decisions relevant to the work of the Special Committee for the current year. The Special Committee also had before it document A/AC.109/2013/L.2, which contained suggestions from the Chair concerning the Special Committee's organization of work, programme of work and timetable.

16. He took it that the Special Committee wished to approve the proposed organization of work for the current year with the understanding that the meeting schedule might be subsequently revised as and when required.

17. *It was so decided.*

18. **Mr. Reyes Rodríguez** (Cuba), Vice-Chair, speaking as the representative of Cuba, said that his delegation commended the Government of Ecuador for its commitment to the cause of decolonization and for offering to host the 2013 regional seminar.

19. **Mr. Aisi** (Papua New Guinea) said that, three years into the Third International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism, it was worth asking whether the Special Committee was still in a position to help the 16 remaining Non-Self-Governing Territories achieve their aspirations in a constructive and effective manner.

20. Rather than continuing to conduct business as usual, the Special Committee should spend more time on finding concrete ways and means of addressing the situation of each territory. It should also liaise closely with each of the administering Powers to ensure that its approach was a holistic one. Such cooperation had been evident in the case of Tokelau and New Zealand and in the ongoing process in New Caledonia, especially with the active involvement of the Melanesian Spearhead Group and all the parties to the Noumea Accord.

Other matters

21. **The Chair** said that, in accordance with the decision of the General Assembly, the meetings of the Special Committee would be convened without the presence of the quorum required under rules 67 and 108 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly. That would enable the Special Committee to declare its meetings open and to proceed with its work without the required quorum. However, the presence of a majority of the members would be required for any decision to be taken.

22. With regard to the regional seminars, he intended to initiate an inter-sessional process that would enable the Committee to expedite the search for seminar hosts so that it could spend more time in the preparation of the seminars.

The meeting rose at 11 a.m.